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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 6942
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Arab Summit, HAMAS (3/30)

11. Summary: Syrian papers continued to report on the Arab Summit in Khartoum and its final communique, which covered the following key points:

On Palestine, the summit renewed commitment to the 2002 Arab peace initiative, which offered Israel a comprehensive peace in return for withdrawal from Arab lands.

On Iraq, the summit renewed solidarity with Iraqis and their elected government and called for respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

On Darfur, the summit confirmed support for the African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur and underlined rejection of deploying other troops in Sudan without the Sudanese government's permission and the UN peacekeepers' recommendation.

On nuclear issues, the summit called on the international community to declare the Middle East a WMD-free zone, particularly of nuclear weapons, and to force Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and open all its nuclear activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On terrorism, the summit condemned all forms of terrorism and called crimes committed by terrorist groups "grave violations of human rights that represent a threat to the national security and stability of Arab countries."

On Syria, the summit expressed solidarity with Syria in the face of international pressure and the US sanctions imposed in 2003.

On Lebanon, the summit supported the Lebanese political process and the Lebanese resistance group Hizbollah, and called for the truth about the 2005 assassination of former PM Rafik Hariri and other recent assassinations, and expressed support for prosecution of the perpetrators.

On religion, the summit stressed the need for co-operation, dialogue and mutual respect among peoples and cultures. It expressed absolute rejection and condemnation of any insult to the Prophet Mohammed and any religion or its symbols and called on nations to pass laws that ban such actions.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"The Khartoum Summit concludes deliberations. The final communiqué rejects US sanctions on Syria and supports its right to restoration of the occupied Golan, reiterates the importance of a full Israeli withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, line, rejects unilateral steps, respects the Palestinian choice, supports Lebanon in the face of Israeli assaults, supports Lebanese national resistance, supports the unity of Iraq and the Arab role in determining Iraq's future" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 3/30)

"Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu'alleem accentuates the importance of President Asad's participation in the Arab Summit in Khartoum. Al-Mu'alleem: We are satisfied with the positive results of the Arab summit" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 3/30)

"The HAMAS cabinet sworn in. Washington suspends contacts with the Palestinian Authority" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 3/30)

"Olmert receives first congratulation on the election of his party in the Knesset from Bush: Our main plan is unilateral disengagement from Palestinians" (Government-owned Tishreen, 3/30)

"Minister of Information Mohsen Bilal discusses with Italian Ambassador in Damascus, Francesco Cirotti, bilateral relations in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean family" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 3/30)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Mere Postulations"

Khaled al-Ashhab, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (3/30): "In light of the current Arab situation, no one expects the impossible from the Arab summit, but the Arab peoples hope their leaders will adhere to the basics, which constitute the last line of defense for the Arab nation.... These basics are represented by solidarity among all Arab countries, moral and political support for the resistance, and rejection of foreign dictates...."

"Arabs should realize that all of them, without exception, are targeted.... Foreign agendas are being implemented through plans like the Greater Middle East Initiative, war on terrorism, and calls for democratization and human rights...."

"The Lesson of Palestinian Resistance"

Ahmad Sawwan, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (3/30): "Syria will continue to support the Palestinian people and their rights because the Palestinian issue is a national issue for every Syrian...."

"When Syria says that HAMAS's electoral victory is a factor of power for Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, it reveals a basic and important fact, namely, that accepting the conditions and dictates of occupation and all agreements of capitulation would harm the Palestinian cause gravely, not only because it is a case of national liberation for the Palestinian people, but also because it is the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This dictates that HAMAS's winning of the Palestinian people's confidence be used to escalate the resistance and the struggle against the occupation and to reject all plans that do not ensure the attainment of all legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the end of the occupation, the return of refugees, and the establishment of a Palestinian state."

